

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC BEHAVIOUR  
IN RURAL AND URBAN CIRCUMSTANCES IN GUYANA: I \*

Walter F. Edwards

Sociolinguistic studies can be roughly divided into two kinds, viz: those that are strongly oriented to descriptive linguistics and those that are strongly biased towards social matters. The linguistically oriented sociolinguist devotes his energies predominantly to the study of such problems as the description of variable and categorical linguistic rules in synchronic use in communities and to the identification of subsets of the community which characteristically use either or both types of rules; to the study of linguistic change over real and apparent time and the social motivation for such changes. Studies of this kind are exemplified by the work of Labov (1972a and 1972b), Wolfram (1969), Cedergren (1973), C.-J. N. Bailey (1973) and others. The more socially biased sociolinguists are less concerned with the minutiae of internal grammatical relationships and more with the wider issues of language function, rules of social interaction through speech, the ethnography of speaking, language choice in multilingual and creole societies and various other issues in which the behavioural, social and sociolinguistic factors interact. Examples of work of the latter kind can be found in many recent collections e.g. Fishman (1972), Ardener (1971), Laver and Hutcheson (1972), Giglioli (1972). Hymes (1972) discusses the distinction being made here in terms of 'socially realistic' and 'socially constituted' sociolinguistics. Here it is enough to state that although parts of the parent study of this paper are devoted to the presentation of some of the broader characteristics of Guyanese creole syntax, the main body of the work belongs to the second mentioned type of sociolinguistic study. I am specifically concerned here to relate the choice of linguistic items to some features of the sociocultural and sociogeographical organization of the Guyanese society and to examine the linguistic correlates of age group memberships in the sample taken.<sup>1</sup>

*Background*

Guyana is a former British Colony situated on the north-eastern shoulder of the South American continent but having historical and cultural ties with the English speaking Caribbean islands, which occupy the Caribbean Sea. The official language of Guyana is English but most Guyanese speak an English-based Creole, Guyanese Creole (GC), which is quite closely related linguistically to other English-based Caribbean Creoles. English enjoys a prestige superiority over Creole but in recent years, Creole and Creole culture have been revitalized in the wake of growing national and regional pride.

The population of Guyana at the last census (1971), was approximately 800,000 people, consisting of six 'ethnic' groups in the following percentage relationship:

Indians	50.41%
Blacks	31.09%
Amerindians	4.45%
Portuguese	1.39%
Chinese	0.64%
Other Europeans	0.53%
Mixed Races	11.49%

Most of these people live on the narrow coastal belt bordering the Atlantic Ocean, but the interior is being rapidly developed. The hinterland is occupied mainly by Amerindians, the cities mainly by Blacks and the coastal rural areas mainly by Indians and Blacks with the Indians in significant numerical superiority.

The country is 83,000 sq. miles in area. The Capital is Georgetown a modern city situated at the mouth of the Demerara river. Georgetown and New Amsterdam, on the Berbice river, are the two major urban communities but there are several other important townships in various parts of the country.

Guyana gained independence from Britain in 1966 and in 1970 declared itself a Republic within the Commonwealth. The politico-economic philosophy of Co-operativism was introduced in 1970 to give an ideological framework to the Government's dependence on Co-operatives and on a spirit of co-operation to help make Guyana an egalitarian society. The economic bases of the country are sugar, rice and bauxite but since 1966, efforts to diversify the economy have been partially successful and many new industries are developing.

One of the distinguishing features of Guyana is its racial heterogeneity. Politicians and patriots are wont to boast of Guyana as being 'a land of six united peoples'. The latter boast is not precisely true even in these days of relative social calms; it bordered on absurdity during 1962-63, when there were racial troubles between the two main ethnic groups, Indians and Blacks. These troubles have to be understood in relation to the history of Guyana's present population.

The Amerindians are thought to have arrived in the New World between 30,000 and 40,000 years ago. The Europeans arrived late in the 15th century and were soon in conflict with the indigenous Amerindians who often resisted their efforts to colonise the area. In the Guyana area, the first Europeans to settle and to engage in agricultural activity were the Dutch who established cotton plantations, on the banks of the Pomeroon, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice rivers in the mid and late 16th century. Initially, the Dutch supplemented their own energies with Amerindian slave labour, but in the 17th century, the slave trade was developed and Black slaves were introduced from the West Coast of Africa. During the 18th century, Dutch monopoly of what is now Guyana was challenged by the English and French but mainly without success until 1796 when the English gained temporary control of the area. The Dutch regained

the area in 1802, but by 1803 the English were in control of the territory again. Joint administration of the colonies of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo began in 1812, two years after which the colonies were formally ceded to Britain. In 1831, they were united to form one colony, then called British Guiana. By this time, the social and sociolinguistic relationships on the plantations were well established. The social relationship between master and slave on plantations has been discussed time and time again and will not be repeated here. These social relationships led to the peculiar sociolinguistic situation on plantations. The language of slaves was Creole. It served as the principal means of communication among Blacks and as the lingua franca between Blacks and Whites. It is certain that planters learnt and spoke Creole mainly to ensure that their requirements were understood and as a means of reinforcing the social distinction between themselves and the slaves (see Cruckshank, 1916). There is, however, no evidence that the linguistic distinction between master and slave was legally enforced in the way Voorhoeve indicated for Surinam (1971), but clearly the social hiatus between the planters and slaves on plantations was a strong means of encouraging the linguistic distance (see also Alleyne, 1964). Bickerton (ms, 1970) also suggests that slave solidarity resulted in the slaves keeping their language as remote as possible (without destroying possibilities of communication, presumably) from that of planters as a means of escaping responsibility for their misapprehension of the masters' wishes. This is not an unreasonable suggestion (see also Turner's experience with Gullah speakers, in Turner, 1949). The social situation on plantations also led to the stigmatising of Creole vis-à-vis English.

The abolition of slavery in the 1830's led to a number of social adjustments. The main one was the introduction between 1835 and 1917 of indentured labourers from Portugal, India, Germany, Ireland, China, the West Indies, Africa and the Azores. The main concern of the planters was to provide themselves with cheap labour to replace the Black slaves. The Indians proved to be the most suitable group and several batches were brought over between 1838 and 1917.

Another immediate result of emancipation was the beginning of the Village Movement (see Farley, 1953; Adamson, 1972). Between 1838 and 1851, several abandoned plantations were bought comunally by ex-slaves through the pooling of their financial resources. These abandoned plantations were transferred into settlements in which occupants practised subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Here the ex-slaves were able to achieve a sense of independence and dignity but their reluctance to continue work on the plantations brought them into conflict with the economic interests of planters who had to resort to the expensive and risky business of the importation of contract labour. The response of the Plantocracy to the recalcitrance of the ex-slaves, was to use their wealth and their control of the legal machinery to frustrate and eventually to halt the Village Movement in the mid-nineteenth century. These strategies served to perpetuate the social opposition of Blacks to Whites. The ex-slaves who opted to go to the two main cities, Georgetown and New Amsterdam, to seek their fortunes, earned the disfavour of the more independent-minded villagers and created the basis of the mild antipathy which still exists between rural and urban residents.

The influx on indentured labourers led to the polarisation of the society into ethnic units. Indians for reasons of cultural conservatism and physical isolation on the plantations, did not integrate to any significant extent into the rest of the society (see Sukdeo, 1969). Neither did the Portuguese and Chinese. The situation continued into the 20th century and prompted the 1927 British Guiana Commission to conclude that the country was a 'congeries of races from all parts of the world with different instincts, different standards and different interests' (*Report* Cmd 2841). The political advances in the mid-twentieth century and especially the rise of nationalism in the 1950's, helped to remove some of the racial prejudices and suspicions but as late as the 1960's, sociologists were still analysing the Guyanese society as a plural society (M.G. Smith, 1960; Depres, 1967). The difficulties of the mid 1960's certainly encouraged these pessimistic analyses. The plural analysis is, however, not uncontroversial. R.T. Smith (1956, 1962) disagrees with it and shows that the cultural differences between Indians and Blacks are not strong enough to overcome the basic unity of the people. Two Guyanese scholars also find the plural analysis untenable: Bacchus (1968, 1970) and Robinson (1970) blame the politicians for fomenting racial troubles. Bacchus (1968) offers a considerable amount of evidence to show that the common admiration of European values and the common decision to use a European-style educational system as a means of social and material advancement, are among the factors which have strong homogenizing effects on the Guyanese society. Robinson (1970) points to the growing tolerance of cultural manifestations across groups and to the effect of urbanisation in bringing about unity.

These homogenizing factors are not very obvious to the ordinary citizen and thus a number of stereo-typical attitudes, the result of the historical processes outlined above, are still strongly felt today. Some of the relevant stereo-typical attitudes are:

- i) Black people in general feel culturally superior to Indians in spite of the fact that Indians are, in general, wealthier than Blacks.
- ii) Blacks feel that their command of English is generally better than Indians.
- iii) Indians feel culturally threatened by Blacks.
- iv) Indians feel that their command of English is less sure than that of Blacks.
- v) Plantation-dwelling Indians are regarded as the most socially inferior and linguistically conservative people in Guyana.

The major motivation of the research project being reported on here was to test the validity of the linguistic stereotypes inherent in these attitudes.

### *The Project*

Among the features of the research project were the following:

1. The hypotheses to be tested were:
  - i) That Indians use Creole features more consistently than Blacks in both the urban and the rural communities studied.

- ii) That rural speakers use Creole features more consistently than urban dwellers.
- iii) Younger people use Creole features more consistently than older speakers.

Informants were identified through scientific random sampling using the 1973 national registration lists. The sample was stratified according to race (Black/Indian), age groups (21-30/45+) and urbanization. In the latter case, four distinctions were made, viz: native of Georgetown, non-native of Georgetown, native of Ann's Grove and native of Clonbrook. Natives were defined as people who have been living in Ann's Grove, Clonbrook or Georgetown for ten years or more without absence for more than three months in the last five years. Non-natives of Georgetown were defined as people who have been living in Georgetown for a period not exceeding two years but not less than one year. The sample was restricted to males.<sup>2</sup>

2. The research was conducted in the inner-city section of Greater Georgetown and in the Ann's Grove-Clonbrook village complex, twenty miles from Georgetown along the East Coast Highway. Ann's Grove and Clonbrook are adjacent Black and Indian villages respectively. The road which separates them is the main thoroughfare in the area. Residents of the villages move freely from area to area and the communities share many facilities including a common play-ground. The Ann's Grove-Clonbrook village complex is the closest I could get to a rural community which resembles the mathematical integration of Indians and Blacks one finds in Georgetown. (The 1962-63 problems gave great encouragement to the tendency for rural villages and settlements to be predominantly Black or Indian). Both villages are mainly farming communities. Residents travel regularly to Georgetown to sell their produce and many people have jobs in Georgetown and use the fairly reliable 'bus and taxi services to commute daily.

3. Elicitation was through interviews with informants. The interview schedule was designed to elicit the conversational and narrative styles of speakers interacting with myself. Sub-sections of the interview schedule elicited responses to questions on language attitudes and domains of language use. A socio-economic questionnaire was separately completed. Fieldwork was done in Guyana in the first quarter of 1974.

4. The final sample frame was confined, for practical purposes, to 48 informants, although 120 interviews were recorded, each lasting approximately one hour. Three sections of each interview were transcribed and analysed. The sections were: *Early interview* (the first twelve minutes), *Later interview* (second twelve minutes) and *Narrative* (i.e. the Danger of Death story).

5. Fifteen grammatical and morphological variables, each with Creole and Post Creole variants, were selected on the following basis:

- a) Grammatical variables are less sensitive to phonological conditioning than phonetic variables.
- b) Previous studies by Bickerton (1971, 1973), by myself (Edwards, 1974) and implicitly by Haynes (1973) indicated that grammatical variables attract more social attention in Guyana than phonological variables.
- c) No *a priori* decision was made as to the relative social value of each variable. It was deemed a sufficient condition that the pilot study responses indicated that each variant was socially significant with respect to the other variant or variants

of its variable. As I anticipated, the results threw some light on the question of relative social stigma with respect to the variables I used.

Below is a list of these variables and some structures in which they appear. The presentation is merely illustrative; no attempt has been made to exhaust the syntactic possibilities of each form.

Pronoun *mi*: (me)  
 $X - \begin{matrix} (a) \\ (ai) \end{matrix} - V - \text{art}_{\text{ind}} + N - Y$   
 mi si a man jestide, a si wan man jestide, ai si a man jestide

Pronoun *awi*:  
 $X - \begin{matrix} (awi) \\ (wi) \end{matrix} - \text{art}_{\text{ind}} + N - Y$   
 awi si wan man jestide, wi si a man jestide

Indefinite article *wan*:  
 $X - \begin{matrix} (wan) \\ (a) \end{matrix} + N - V \text{ Pn} - Y$   
 wan man si mi, a man si mi

Noun plural morpheme: (N + dem)  
 $X - \text{art}_{\text{def}} + \begin{matrix} (N^{\text{sing}} + \emptyset) \\ (N^{\text{sing}}_{-Z}) \end{matrix} - V - Y$   
 di bai dem si mi, di bai si mi, di baiz si mi

Anticipatory *a*:  
 $X - \begin{matrix} (a) \\ (iz) \\ (it\ iz) \end{matrix} - \text{art}_{\text{ind}} + N - V - Y$   
 a wan man, iz a man, it iz a man

Verb complement *fu*:  
 $X - \text{Pn} - V + \begin{matrix} (fu) \\ (to) \end{matrix} + V_{\text{inf}} - \text{art}_{\text{def}} + N - Y$   
 wi go fu si di man, wi go to si di man

Middle/obligatory verb *gat*:  
 (a)  $X - \text{Pn} - \begin{matrix} (gat) \\ (hav) \end{matrix} - \text{art}_{\text{def}} + \text{adj} + N - Y$   
 (b)  $X - \text{Pn} - \begin{matrix} (gat) \\ (hav) \end{matrix} + \text{Verb Comp.} + V - Y$   
 (a) awi gat wan big hous, wi hav a big hous  
 (b) awi gat fu go de, wi hav to go de

Progressive marker *a*:  
 $X - \text{art}_{\text{ind}} + N - \begin{matrix} (a + V) \\ (V + \text{in}) \\ (\text{aux} + V + \text{in}) \end{matrix} - Y$   
 di bai a go hom, di bai goin hom, di bai iz goin hom

Habitual marker *a*:

X - Pn - (a ) + V - N - Y  
 (doz)  
 (∅ )

awi a go markit stedi, awi doz go markit stedi, wi go to markit stedi

Future marker *gon*:

X - Pn - (gon ) + V -N - Y  
 ((wil)(goin to))

de gon ple krikrit tomara, de goin to/wil ple krikrit tomara

Past marker:

X - Pn - V<sub>act</sub> (∅ ) - Pn - Y  
 (ed)

hi ple krikrit jestide, hi pled krikrit jestide

Past *bin*:

X - Pn - (bin ) - art + N - Y  
 ((woz)(wor))

mi bin wan kjapinta, ai woz a kjapinta

Pronoun *am*:

X -Pn - V - (am) - Prep + Pn - Y  
 (it)

mi tek am pan am, ai tuk it from him

Negative concord:

X - Pn - neg + V - (neg) + indef - Y  
 (∅ )

mi na no nonbadi in de, ai dont no enibadi in de

*Ya*:

X - Pn - V - art + N - (ja ) - Y  
 (her)

shi drap di ting ja, shi drap di ting her

6. Counting procedures were adopted to ensure the maximum comparability. The incidence of each variant in each section of each interview was counted and this information together with the socio-economic data was punched onto computer cards. Fortran programmes to calculate the percentages, assemble groups and determine group scores were written. An SPSS programme processed the data concerned with the language attitudes side of the research. The results can be summarised under the following headings:

(a) *General patterns*

- i) The quantitative results showed that some Creole items, e.g. subject pronoun *aw*, indefinite article *wan*, pluraliser *dem*, anticipatory *a*, habitual *a*, progressive *a*, oblique *am*, and deictic *ya*, were almost entirely confined to the rural areas.
- ii) Other items were less restricted but were mainly confined to the rural sample. Examples were the verb complementizer *fu*, past copulative *bin*, past tense marker *bin* and subject pronoun *mi*.
- iii) Another group of items exemplified by future marker *gon*, middle/obligatory verb *gat* and *neg-concord* were widely distributed over the entire sample.

iv) First replacement forms were in widespread use over the whole sample.

Figures 1 - 3 show some of the above patterns.

(b) *Stratification patterns*

i) The geographical variable was the most significant independent variable. In every case the native Georgetown groups chose the English alternative more consistently than the rural groups.

ii) In Georgetown the race variable was subordinate in effect to the age variable. Older informants were more disposed to choosing English variants than were the younger people. The Indian and Black groups were not significantly distinguished in Georgetown although the statistical evidence indicates that Blacks were marginally stronger users of English variants.

iii) In the rural area both age and race are significant sociolinguistic variables. Young Blacks, on the average, were much more strongly oriented to English than young Indians. Older Blacks and older Indians behaved quite similarly but the average older Indians were marginally more inclined to use non-Creole variants than the older Blacks, possibly through hypercorrection due to the specific circumstances of being interviewed by me. Younger Blacks chose non-Creole variants more consistently than older Blacks, while the pattern reversed for the Indian groups.

iv) The non-native Georgetown group was the most insecure of urban groups. On variants in groups (a)(i) above, they patterned closely to the native urban groups. On less restricted forms they sometimes were more consistent Creole users than young rural Blacks.

v) The Y.R.B. group were the most English oriented rural group but on some non-standard variants which are not strongly stigmatized they conform to the rural pattern.

*Style*

The division of the interview into *Early*, *Later* and *Narrative* sequences was done to test the hypothesis that Guyanese speakers characteristically shift towards a more creolised style when they are asked to tell a story. *Early* and *Later* sequences relate to the conversational styles of the subjects.

The results showed that the distinction between conversational and narrative styles was indeed marked by linguistic adjustments towards Creole but some groups showed a sharper adjustment than others. The urban groups showed comparatively little adjustment whereas the rural groups showed, generally, a sharp break. The Y.R.I. group showed the more consistent rural pattern across styles. *Early* and *Later* refer respectively to Joos's (1961) distinction between *consultative* and *casual* styles. There was generally an adjustment toward more non-standard and Creole speech in the movement from *Early* to *Later* conversation but there are exceptions to the rule. These exceptions can partly be explained by the fact that adjacent sections of the interview span were selected for *Early* and *Later* speech. The lack of significant adjustment across *Early* and *Later* speech can be interpreted as indicating success in eliciting relaxed informal speech throughout the interview.

### *Language attitudes*

Questions on language attitude were put to most informants (in some cases informants preferred not to be asked such questions). The results confirmed that stereo-typical attitudes to the speech of ethnic groups still persist in town and country. Additionally, the results showed that Creole was still regarded by rural and urban people as a debased form of speech.<sup>3</sup> Most people thought that Creole should not be taught in schools as a separate language, nor should it be encouraged to facilitate communication between teacher and pupils. There are exceptions to this pattern and in most cases Indian informants offered the unorthodox opinion.

The domains of Creole were said to be the home, among close friends, or (in one case) to bewilder and entertain foreigners. Most people thought that radio programmes ought to be in English but politicians were expected to speak some Creole. In speech to employers and to respected strangers, English was said to be most appropriate.

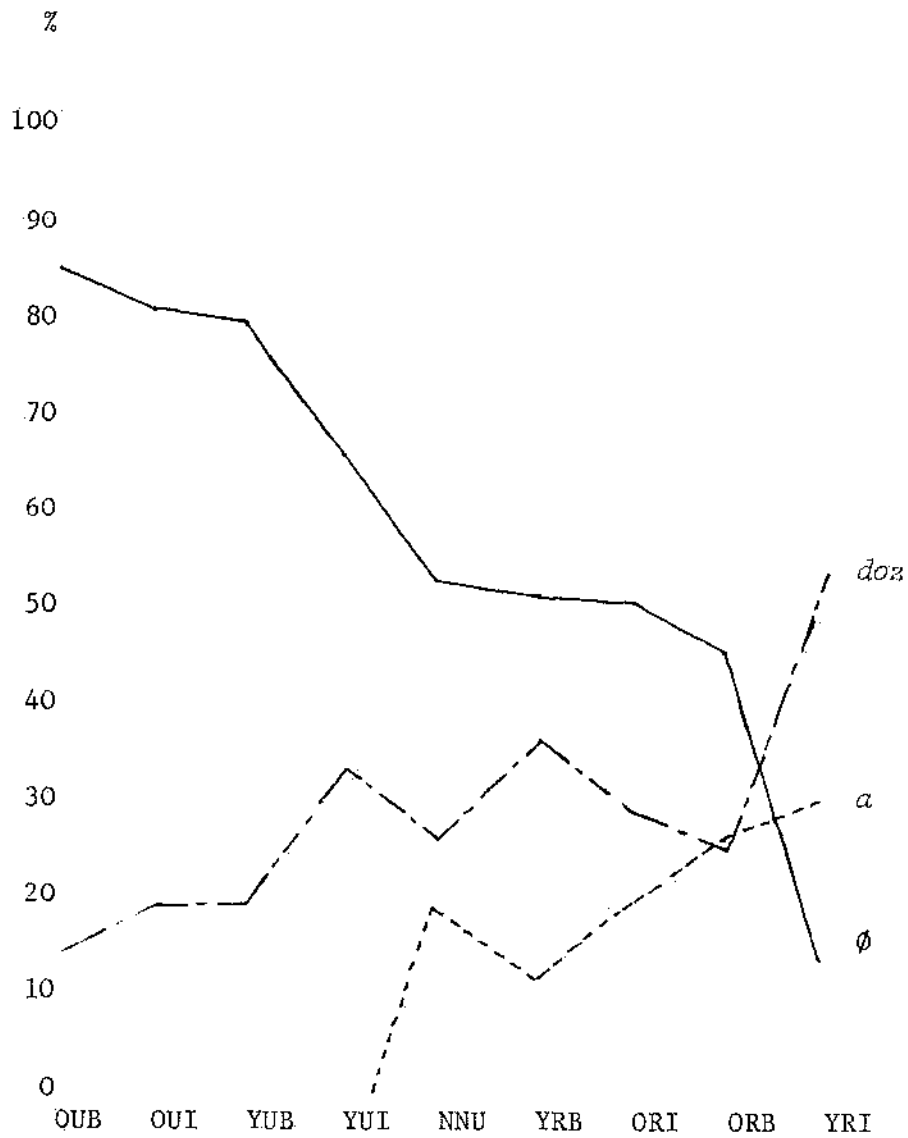
### *Individual patterns*

The results indicate that native Georgetowners can generally be said to speak varieties of English. Variation occurs between standard morphological features and non-standard ones. Urbanisation exercises a powerful linguistic influence on immigrants to the city, causing them to adjust quickly to the linguistic norms. The results also show that the rural area sampled is essentially a bi-lingual community in which mono-lingual English speakers live in close social and physical contact with insecure bi-linguals and near mono-lingual Creole speakers. Consequently the social groups in Georgetown are much more natural from the standpoint of linguistic patterning than the rural groups. In the latter community, individual performances were often atypical of their groups while individuals in Georgetown were generally consistent with their group patterns, but even in Georgetown some interesting individual patterns can be seen. The lack of congruence between individual and group performance is not necessarily a by-product of the kind of grouping used in the present survey. Bickerton commented on the same problem in the work of Labov (Bickerton, 1971:488).

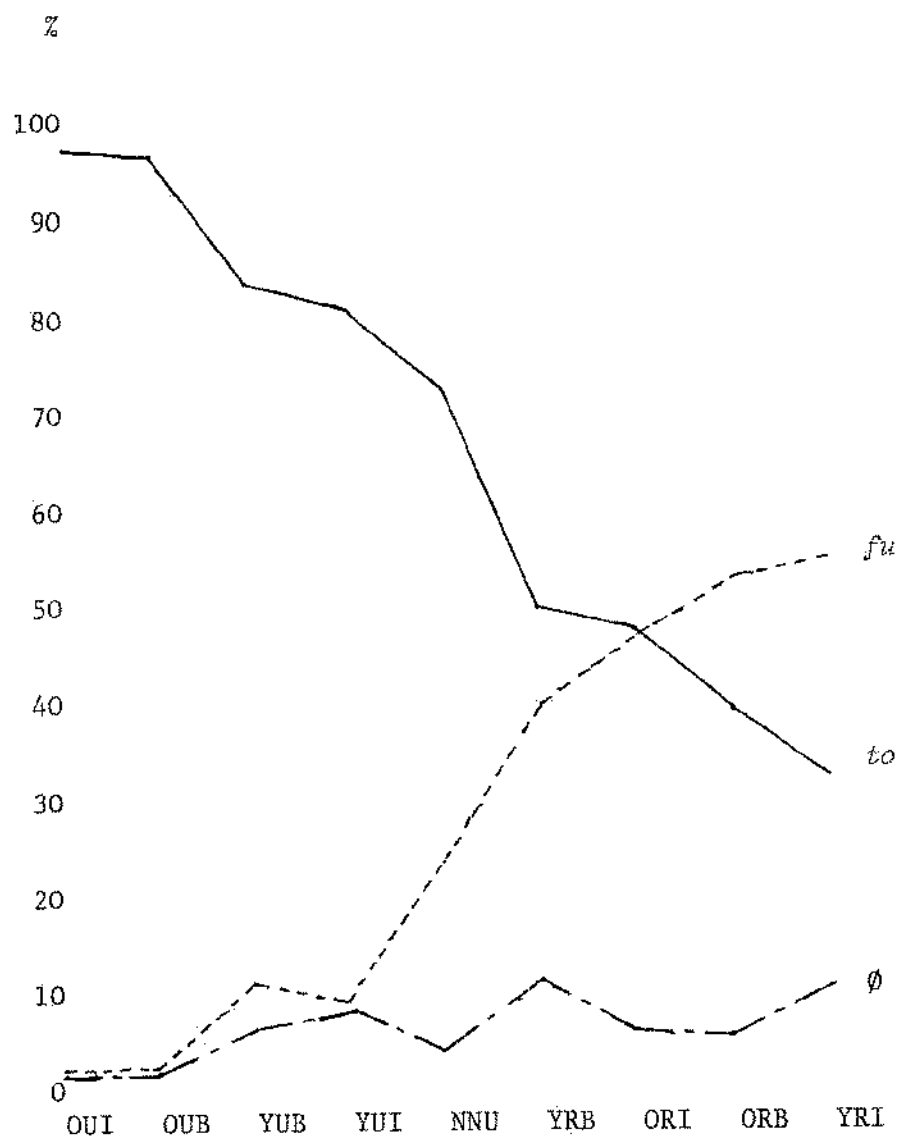
Groups	Variant 1 'English'	Variant 2 'Creole'	Variant 3 'Non-standard'
OUB	82.53	5.69	11.78
OUI	79.66	7.19	13.15
YUB	73.73	10.53	15.74
YUI	66.54	13.26	20.20
NNU	54.53	29.29	18.19
YRB	51.01	24.93	24.06
ORI	41.69	40.67	17.64
ORB	36.98	48.16	14.86
YRI	26.86	53.96	19.98

Note: Y = young, U = urban, R = rural, B = Black, I = Indian,  
NN = non-native.

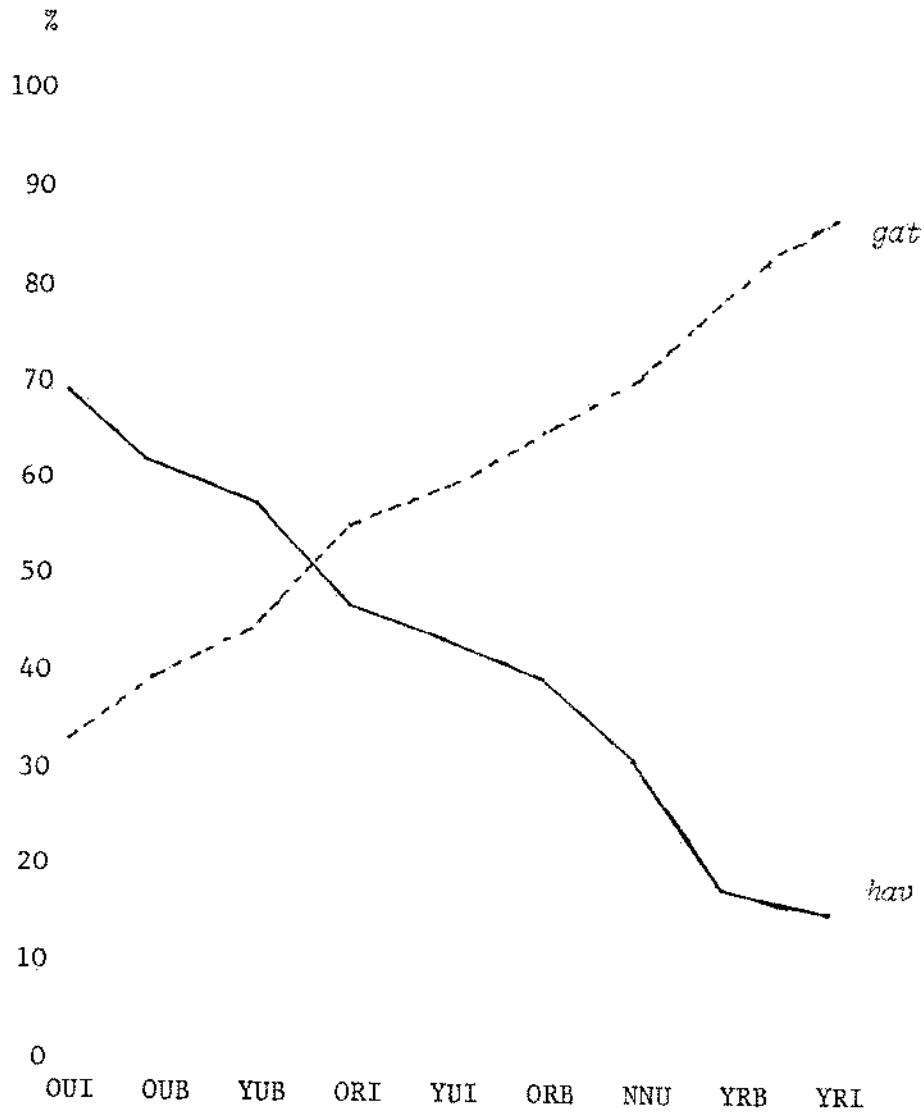
TABLE 1: Overall Performance of Groups on Creole and English Variants  
(Mean Percentages)

FIGURE I: Habitual  $\alpha$ .

Groups	Mean Loci	$\phi$	$\alpha$	$doz$
OUB	21.2	85.81	0.00	14.19
OUI	28.7	81.59	0.00	18.41
YUB	19.8	80.28	0.00	19.72
YUI	22.0	66.72	0.00	33.28
NNU	33.8	53.87	19.95	26.18
YRB	30.4	52.83	11.06	36.11
ORI	49.80	52.58	19.40	28.02
ORB	34.60	46.39	27.05	26.56
YRI	40.40	14.21	31.28	54.51

FIGURE 2: Verb Complementizer *fu*.

Groups	Mean Loci	<i>to</i>	<i>fu</i>	∅
OUI	36.2	98.69	0.49	0.82
OUB	30.4	97.38	1.14	1.48
YUB	31.8	83.32	10.25	6.43
YUI	29.6	81.60	8.51	9.88
NNU	35.7	73.44	22.05	4.51
YRB	32.4	50.23	38.66	11.11
ORI	31.8	48.72	45.36	5.91
ORB	31.4	40.45	53.13	6.42
YRI	26.4	33.34	55.17	11.49

FIGURE 3: Full Verb *gat*.

Groups	Mean Loci	<i>hav</i>	<i>gat</i>
OUI	23.3	67.78	32.22
OUB	20.8	62.36	37.64
YUB	22.6	56.21	43.79
ORI	33.0	45.64	54.36
YUI	28.2	41.88	58.12
ORB	22.4	36.84	63.16
NNU	27.0	30.98	69.02
YRB	24.2	16.59	83.41
YRI	21.6	14.55	85.45

In Table 1 note the following points:

- a) Georgetown groups generally reject the Creole and non-standard variants in favour of English ones. Rural informants were less consistent speakers but on average favoured the Creole and non-standard choices.
- b) The NNU group was the least English-oriented of the Georgetown groups. The YRB is the most English-oriented rural group.
- c) Native Georgetown groups behaved more like each other than rural groups.
- d) In Georgetown the older informants scored slightly more heavily on English variants than the younger people. A pattern is less obvious in rural areas.

Figure 1 illustrates pattern (a)(i) above. All Georgetown groups eschew Habitual *a*. This is a conservative Creole feature and the pattern suggests that generally this item is strongly stigmatised in the city. Note, however, the strong performance on *doz*, which is a replacement form modeled on English 'truth insistence' auxiliary *do* (Palmer, 1965) but with tertiary stress, and, sometimes, reduced vowel quality and even the loss of the final sibilant (thus [dɔz] ~ [dɔ] ~ [dɔ̃]). Notice also that although the ORI and YRB group chose roughly the same proportion of their habitual type-tokens as  $\emptyset$ , the YRB more clearly preferred *doz* to *a*.

Figure 2 exemplifies pattern (a) (ii) above. The conservative Creole item *fu* is generally rejected by urban speakers but is very prevalent in the rural sample. It is one of the more interesting variants in that it neatly stratifies the rural and urban sub-samples. The YRB are quite willing to use *fu* significantly even though they reject other Creole variants.  $\emptyset$  is rarely used mainly because it is grammatically restricted to desiderative and inceptive verbs. With the latter verbs,  $\emptyset$  forms part of a system of options which include both *to* and *fu*. The YRB group exploited their  $\emptyset$  option maximally.

Figure 3 illustrates (a)(iii) patterns.

#### *Explanations*

In his work on the internal evolution of linguistic rules (1972b), Labov drew attention to some of the 'explanations' which are usually offered to account for linguistic change. One of the suggestions he dealt with was that of 'social motivation' (cf. Labov, 1963:273-309, 1972b:39). The power of the social motivation principle is discussed exhaustively in Weinreich, Labov and Herzog's article in Lehmann and Malkiel's anthology (1968:95-188), but a brief characterisation of the process appears in Labov's early work (1963). The following process is suggested:

- '1. A language feature used by Group A is marked by contrast with another standard dialect.
2. Group A is adopted as a reference group by Group B and the feature is adopted and exaggerated as a sign of social identity in response to pressure from outside forces.
3. Hypercorrection under increased pressure in combination with the forces of structural symmetry leads to a generalisation of the feature in other linguistic units of Group B.

4. A new norm is established as the process of generalisation levels off.
5. The new norm is adopted by neighbouring and succeeding groups for whom B serves as a reference group.'

This concatenation of socially motivated linguistic adjustments has been described by many other scholars (e.g. Fischer, 1958; Joos, 1961), but its linguistic bases have most carefully been dealt with by Labov and his colleagues. It is theoretically and practically unwise to extrapolate from one set of sociolinguistic circumstances to another; for this reason alone we should be suspicious of positing a similar chain of events in Guyana. The fact that Labov is describing a comparatively homogeneous society where phonetic nuances are charged with social value is an even greater argument for caution. But there is historical and contemporary social evidence that in post-Creole societies like Guyana the social motivation to adjust to the superstrate language, viz: English, is a very powerful factor in precipitating linguistic change. Hymes (1971:3) makes a very important point:

'not the least of the crimes of colonialism has been to persuade the colonised that they, or ways in which they differ, are inferior -- to convince the stigmatized that the stigma is deserved. Indigenous languages, and especially pidgins and creoles have suffered in this respect.'

If we accept, at least for the moment, that the desire to behave linguistically and otherwise like the English planter class and in more recent times the western oriented social élite, provides the main impulse for linguistic adjustment in Guyana, then it is possible to offer some 'explanations' for some of the patterns noted above. The Creole continuum could then be conceptualised as Bickerton (1971, 1973) and DeCamp (1971) conceptualise it as being sociolinguistically dynamic. If we argue this way we can 'explain' the rural/urban pattern by saying that the 'pressure from above' is more insistent in urban circumstances than in rural communities, and that, therefore, the social and linguistic acculturation to English is more complete in Georgetown than in the Ann's Grove-Clonbrook area. We would then expect to find social differences between Georgetown and Ann's Grove-Clonbrook, which would correspond to the linguistic differences. Evidence of social differences is shown in many ways, including differences in attitude to traditional Creole rituals. In Ann's Grove-Clonbrook, for example, Creole marriage traditions are faithfully followed. Before each wedding there are several nights of *Queh-Queh* celebrations culminating in a *Kaakalay* session on the wedding eve. Rural Indians faithfully observe Hindu wedding rituals and *Barriat* processions are very popular. Among rural Blacks *Wakes*, *Nine Nights* and *Candels* are always held when the occasions arise. In the rural area the traditional Annancy stories are still very popular but in Georgetown they are very rarely heard. I was only able to elicit two Annancy stories from Georgetown informants but in Ann's Grove-Clonbrook, Annancy stories are eagerly offered by young and old.

The retention of Creole speech habits and other Creole social behaviour in a rural area so close to the city is interesting. The following explanatory suggestions seem reasonable to me:

- a) By the time of Emancipation in 1833, Guyanese Creole as an English-based Creole,<sup>4</sup> had only been about 30 years old, hence many ex-slaves were first generation English Creole speakers. The physical separation of Blacks from plantations removed the master-slave relationship and therefore relieved much of the social pressure on Blacks, which made for linguistic acculturation, and quite possibly slowed down the rate of linguistic change.
- b) The decision on the part of most ex-slaves to go into peasant farming and to resist all efforts on the part of planters to keep them in the paid employ of the Plantocracy, was motivated by a rejection of the social conditions on the plantations. It is reasonable to conclude that a consequence of this rejection would be the rejection of the idea of total linguistic identity with the planter class. It is certain that ex-slaves continued to admire the ways of the English and to strive towards the acquisition of the material and behavioural trappings of their culture, but village solidarity required that a linguistic distance be maintained. On the other hand, the ex-slaves who sought their fortunes in the city felt no such inhibiting influences.
- c) The various confrontations between the villagers and the planters served to perpetuate the social distance between the Whites and rural Blacks and hence, in the post-emancipation circumstances, to inhibit rapid linguistic acculturation. Factors (a) - (c) quite likely led to the retention of the existing Creole speaking tradition in Black villages.
- d) Among rural Indians, various features of their indentureship possibly served to prevent rapid linguistic acculturation to English. As part of the encouragement strategies of planters, Indians were allowed to continue practising their religion and speaking their languages. Initially, therefore a diglossic situation existed between the Indians and the rest of the society (Ferguson, 1959). Creole was learnt and used by Indians as a lingua franca for wider communication, while their own domestic and religious activities were conducted in Hindi, Tamil and Urdu. Under such conditions, there was very little pressure on Indians to adjust their Creole towards English.

The inevitable process of the creolisation of Indians led to the loss of Hindi, Urdu and other Indian languages as native languages and the dependence of Indians on Creole as their sole means of communication. However, linguistic acculturation to English usage could have been partially inhibited by the fact that the economic interests of planters and Indians were often in conflict. These conflicts and the feeling of common suffering led to the emergence of a strong sense of solidarity expressed as *mati* sentiment. The feeling that 'all awi a one people' was the emotional basis of *mati* sentiment and transcended caste and other social barriers. On some occasions, the solidarity of the Indians prevailed against the wishes of the Plantocracy but in most cases the planters succeeding in having their way served only to re-inforce the *mati* sentiment. It seems reasonable to expect that *mati* also meant a linguistic solidarity among estate workers and that conservative Guyanese Creole was used as a signal of fellowship. These tendencies reinforced other more direct inhibitory factors such as the non-existence of adequate educative facilities on plantations. The modern estate community

is in some ways quite like the plantation communities although there have been many changes. *Mati* sentiment has survived and is the main social reason for the predominance of *eye-pass* disputes on estates (Jaywardena, 1963). Many stereotypical responses to Indians originally related to estate dwelling Indians and have been generalised to embrace all Indians.

Indian villages, such as Clonbrook, are differently organized from estate communities. Historically, Indian villages have had an easier passage than Black villages but the same spirit of independence motivated their original occupants. The similarity of their economic bases and basic motivation of their residence, among other things, have led to a similarity in social organization in Indian and Black villages. In both types of community, for instance, a social hierarchy based on wealth and education exists. One should therefore expect that the sociolinguistic structure of Ann's Grove and Clonbrook should be similar and this expectation is partially satisfied by the similarity of the linguistic behaviour of older Indians and Blacks. The disparity between the linguistic performance of younger Blacks and Indians could be related to the difference in life styles of the two groups. Young Blacks are very strongly attracted to Georgetown and many of them make nightly journeys to the city to visit friends and to seek entertainment. The rural young Indian is more socially conservative and prefers to remain in his village and participate in local games and other locally available forms of entertainment.

### *Conclusions*

The following general conclusions seem reasonable to me at this stage of the analysis:

1. Sociolinguistic stereotypes in Guyana do not always reflect the true sociolinguistic structure of the society.
  - a) Contrary to popular belief, *race* is not the most significant sociolinguistic factor in Georgetown.
  - b) In the rural areas race and age groupings stratify the population with race being very significant among younger people.
  - c) The most conservative Creole speakers are young Indians. Contrary to popular belief older Indians are not more conservative Creole speakers than older Blacks. The reverse is true, on the evidence of this sample.
2. The geographical variable was the most significant independent sociolinguistic variable.
3. Attitudes to Creole indicate that the language is still stigmatized but the continued use of Creole forms in the rural areas shows that expressed attitudes do not always coincide with actual performance.

### *Theoretical implications*

A full discussion of the theoretical implications of the sociolinguistic patterns presented above must await the second part of this article. Here I wish to indicate the general lines along which I shall be arguing. Running

through the explanatory suggestions made above is the idea that the linguistic behaviour of each group is motivated partly by its desire to identify with a particular set of social values of which language is a component. These suggestions are relatable to the theoretical genre which focuses on the symbiotic nature of language. It seems to me that the theoretical position which would interpret the results presented above should recognise the principle of social-psychological identification. Interpretative suggestions of this sort have been made in recent sociolinguistic literature. Labov's (1963) suggestions for the explanations of the sociolinguistic organisation of Martha's Vineyard, for instance, appeals to social psychology; so too do the ideas of Levine and Crockett (1966) on linguistic reference groups as part of the social-psychological system operating in Piedmont, North Carolina. In her article in the *Pride and Holmes* collection, Sankoff suggests (1972:48) that the linguistic behaviour of some of her informants indicated a desire on their part to psychologically identify with particular groups in the society. Within this genre the approach which most closely fits the results discussed above, is that of Le Page (1968, 1972, 1974). Le Page's theoretical position has been worked out with multi-lingual societies in mind, particularly those multi-lingual societies which are not strongly polarized between competing language codes, e.g. the Belize and St. Lucia situations, but his conceptions are general enough to account for post-Creole societies such as Guyana. Focusing mainly on individuals, Le Page posits a law with four riders:

- 'Each individual creates the systems of his verbal behaviour so that they resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he may wish to be identified, to the extent that:
- a) he can identify the groups
  - b) he has the opportunity and ability to observe and analyse their behavioural systems.
  - c) his motivation is sufficiently strong to impel him to choose and to adapt his behaviour accordingly.
  - d) he is still able to adapt his behaviour.'
- (Le Page, 1974:46)

Applied to my results one could argue that most individuals in Georgetown wish to identify with the socially prestigious Georgetown élite who use English habitually and who regard Creole speech as debased. Older individuals who have had more time to make abstractions as to what it is to be like members of this prestige group, have been able to approximate more closely to the approved model than younger people.

According to this interpretation the YRB group could be seen to demonstrate a desire to identify with the urban pattern but on variants such as *fu* and *gon*, retain their rural identity. The other rural groups indicate a choice to identify with the rural pattern while recognizing the value of the urban pattern through their incremental adjustment to it on many occasions. In the next article I shall further examine the applicability of Le Page's approach to my results and compare his views with other theoretical positions.

#### FOOTNOTES

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1. In the present paper I shall outline the historical and cultural background of Guyana, discuss in a general way the results which seem to be emerging and indicate that a socio-psychological theoretical model best interprets the findings. The micro-systemic results will not be examined. These and the full complements of findings together with further theoretical discussions will be the subject of a future paper. As a consequence of its introductory nature, the present article will be deficient in many details.
2. Stratification yielded nine sample groups -- four native urban groups, four native rural groups and one non-native urban group. Sampling was controlled to ensure that the social classes I recognized were equally represented in each group.
3. These results are similar to the findings of Haynes (1973).
4. By this I mean that the native language of the colonial administrators was English from about 1803 onwards. Before this the Colonies of Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara were owned and ruled by Dutch planters. This general statement must be qualified to allow for the influence of English-Creole speaking slaves and English-speaking planters in Berbice during the 17th century and of an English colony in what is now Surinam between 1750 and 1766. During the latter period the English-based Creole still spoken in Surinam (Sranan) developed.

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